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ABSTRACT

This paper identifies the directions in which new developments in educational planning are moving and draws some conclusions on how the training of specialists in the field of educational planning is likely to be affected by changing notions and practices. The first part of the paper outlines the assumptions that have characterized the field in recent years. These assumptions are concerned with planning as social research; the distribution of education; the quantity, quality, and content of educational planning; educational planning at subnational levels; and what lies beyond the design of educational plans. Against this background, the second section briefly reviews how the changes discussed are likely to affect the role and the competencies required of the people who will be in charge of planning and the relationship of these changes to the training of planners. The areas discussed are the research component in training; distribution, disparities, and equality in education; the determinants of educational outcomes; regional and local planning; and the implementation and evaluation of educational plans. (Author/IRT)

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NEW DIRECTIONS IN EDUCATIONAL PLANNING: IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAINING

Hans N. Weiler

A contribution to the IIEP/SIDA Seminar on "Changing needs for training in educational planning and administration"
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INTRODUCTION

To take stock in 1976 of the 'state of the art' in educational planning leads to two overall observations: (a) the principles, methods, philosophies and techniques of educational planning vary from one country to the next more than they ever have; and (b) this variation notwithstanding, the 'art' or craft of educational planning as a whole is no longer what it was in the late fifties or sixties but is gradually moving towards a different set of tasks.

As far as the variation in philosophies and strategies of educational planning is concerned, we still find on the one end of the continuum firm opposition to the very notion that something as personal and delicate as education could or even should be planned, let alone by some central and anonymous authority. Even though countries like the United States, Japan, West Germany and others undertake many governmental activities which are specifically concerned with the systematic anticipation and preparation of the future of their educational systems, there is still at the same time profound distrust of both the notion of educational planning and its various connotations.

Among those countries that have adopted, without such misgivings, some form of educational planning as well as the label that goes with it, the diversity of approaches to the task of planning future educational systems is increasing rather than decreasing. Where many countries, especially in the developing regions of the world, started out with the adoption of a relatively simple and straightforward model of establishing the desired output patterns of an educational system, and the flow patterns leading to it, on the basis of some projection of future manpower needs, the last fifteen or twenty years have introduced considerable variation and modification of this original model on the one hand, and a number of other models, on the other. Experience in planning, a better understanding of the complexities in the relationship between education and social, political and economic change, and the resulting doubts about the suitability of some of the original assumptions in educational planning have all contributed to a process of reflection, change and new departures in the planning of educational development.

It now seems to be an urgent task to establish, empirically and systematically, a conceptual map of these new departures and to develop it into a new typology and methodology of educational planning. While this

effort is being undertaken as part of the research programme of the International Institute for Educational Planning and elsewhere, a tentative set of directions for these new developments in educational planning is already becoming visible. This paper tries to identify these directions and will begin to draw some conclusions on how the training of specialists in the field of educational planning is likely to be affected by the changing notions and practices of educational planning.

To be sure, some of these changes are sufficiently experimental or tentative to warrant careful further attention before being accepted as major trends in the development of educational planning as a whole. It is as yet difficult, for example, to distinguish between rhetoric and reality as regards popular participation in educational planning ('participatory educational planning'), but there is no question about there being a rather widespread turn of attention to the 'micro' aspects of educational planning in general - a development which calls for a close examination of some of our more 'macro'-oriented assumptions in the training of educational planning personnel.

In a first part, this paper will review some of the changes in emphasis on new assumptions in educational planning which have characterized the field in recent years. Against this background, the second part of the paper will then suggest an agenda for a review of training priorities and training strategies as regards the preparation of personnel qualified to cope with the future tasks of planning educational development.

I. TOWARDS NEW TASKS IN EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

1. Educational Planning as Social Research

Educational systems do not develop according to plans, but in accordance with a complex set of social, political and economic factors such as status aspirations, group interests, the influence of large enterprises, etc. The failure of many plans for the development of educational systems is directly attributable to their authors' being oblivious to or ignorant of this complex set of conditions. It is therefore one of the most vital tasks of those in charge of educational planning to develop a rather thorough understanding of the pattern and strength of the various factors that are likely to affect the chances of success of any given educational policy. It is a poor planning posture to consider education as an 'independent variable': The interplay of social status, political power and economic wealth draws a very narrow line around the ability of educational systems to become an autonomous lever of development of any kind. To maximise whatever limited leverage education thus has, requires systematic social inquiry as one of the planner's first and most important tasks.

The relationship between the educational system and the world of work is a case in point. We know by now that our conventional models of projecting the necessary growth of educational systems on the basis of projecting the manpower needs of the production system has been inadequate, largely because it has neglected characteristics, requirements and expectations of the production system that go beyond the broad skill parameters of the occupational classifications used in most manpower projections. It is thus necessary for the educational planner to have a much more thorough understanding of the non-cognitive as well as cognitive, the attitudinal as well as the know-how aspects and requirements of work in different production settings.

2. Planning the Distribution of Education

Faced with the problem of extremely low rates of schooling in many of the developing countries, educational planning developed at the outset an understandable preoccupation with the need for growth - growth in the sense of an aggregate increase in the number of school places and in the proportion of age cohorts attending school, and with the various statistical

indicators derived from or contributing to this aggregate. While the problem of achieving an adequate capacity of the educational system has by no means been solved in many countries, a second policy concern has moved up alongside this original attention to growth. This second concern considers not just the overall volume of educational opportunity and services, but also the way in which these services and opportunities are distributed across the population along regional, social, ethnic, age or sex lines.

While this distributive aspect of educational development has become in many countries an important item on the agenda of policy-makers, educational planning, still very much under the influence of a more aggregate, growth-oriented notion, has been slow to develop concepts, methods and techniques for the design and implementation of plans which take existing disparities into account and are designed in such a way as to overcome them. Clearly, this is not just a task of disaggregating overall figures of schools, students, teachers etc. The more important (and more difficult) aspect of this distribution-oriented task in educational planning is the identification of the factors that account for such disparities as are found to exist, and the resulting effort to take these factors into account in designing new educational plans which are geared towards greater equality. Again, beyond the substantial amount of descriptive information needed on the present pattern of distribution in educational services, a major diagnostic research effort is required in order to understand why certain groups in a population find it difficult not only to enter into an educational programme, but also to persist and succeed in it. In some instances, information which is already available will have to be re-analysed and re-interpreted in different ways (as in the case of regional statistics); in other instances, new information, including information on the socio-economic and other background of students and non-students or on the obstacles to educational or post-school occupational success of certain groups of the population will have to be gathered - not necessarily by the planner himself, but in such a way as to be easily accessible and interpretable by him.

If dealing, as the educational planner does, with the future of education is already a delicate and often politically sensitive task, addressing the even more sensitive issue of inequality and disparity in education is likely to place the planner, together with his decision-making colleagues, in an even more delicate position where not only considerable prudence, but also a good sense of the 'art of the possible' are required.

3. Quantity, Quality and Content in Educational Planning

It is not much of an oversimplification to say that educational planning has so far been primarily concerned with how many people enter into, pass through, and re-emerge from the various sectors and levels of education, and not really with what happens to them in the course of this process. It has been assumed that graduates of the educational system have certain qualifications which make them employable or otherwise useful, but it has never been an explicit concern of educational planning to inquire into the conditions under which certain specified outputs or outcomes of the educational process are being achieved.

Our main argument here is that the anticipation and the planning of the flow of people through the various components of an educational system can not be separated from anticipating and planning the kind of learning experience to which they are thereby exposed. In other words, educational planners will have to become cognizant of the factors that account for different qualitative outcomes of the educational process so as to be able to plan for the reinforcement of those factors which contribute to desired educational outcomes while diminishing or eliminating those factors which can be shown to lead to undesired outcomes - the criteria for what is or is not desirable obviously stemming from the objectives which the country has set for itself.

Having argued for such a more comprehensive, outcome-oriented concern in planning the future of educational systems, we have to admit also the scarcity of firm knowledge about what determines educational outcomes. It is here again that educational planners face an important research task in studying the processes by which changes in educational systems lead to changes or improvements in educational outcomes.

In administrative and, as will be shown later, training terms, this task will require a much closer relationship between the conventional agencies of educational planning and their concerns with quantitative flows, and the concerns of both educational researchers and those professionals who are dealing with developing the content and curriculum of education.

4. Educational planning at subnational levels

One of the questions that has been rarely asked in educational planning (mainly because the answer was taken for granted) has been: Where does educational planning take place? It has been generally assumed that educational planning is a function which is closely attached to the national

decision-making authority and is therefore located at the centre or the apex of the political and administrative system. To be sure, some systems with a more federal character have for some time known planning mechanisms at the level of state government (Republics in the USSR, States in Nigeria, the Federal Republic of Germany or Brazil). By and large, however, the prevailing model of educational planning has been that of an activity carried out at the central level.

There are two reasons why we should begin to question this assumption.

First, there has always been, with or without attention by planning specialists, a considerable amount of planning activity at levels below the national centre of decision-making. Even where a central, national plan for the development of education was the only visible expression of educational planning in a country, a great deal of less visible, subsidiary planning usually took place at the level of provinces, local communities and even individual educational institutions. In some cases, the national plan was nothing but the final, slightly edited summation of various partial plans prepared at lower levels.

Secondly, an ever larger number of countries is actively moving in the direction of distributing planning as well as other functions over a wider range of administrative levels below the centre. Involving local, provincial, regional communities in the planning process is expected to generate more commitment to its outcomes or at least to improve the level of communication within the system. Planning bodies responsible for a smaller and more manageable area or part of the population are believed to be more closely in touch with reality and therefore able to produce more realistic plans than a remote planning authority in a distant capital. In some instances, decentralized planning is meant to increase the participation of parents, teachers and students in the planning process. Specific problems, such as the complex relationship between education and employment, can often be understood and taken into account better at the more manageable level of regional planning. For these and a good many other reasons, recent years have seen a variety of attempts to establish or strengthen planning mechanisms at sub-national, regional or local levels. Their mode of operation and especially their degree of autonomy vary considerably from one case to another, and it will require more comparative information than we have at the moment to arrive at a useful typology of the various kinds of 'micro'-planning.

Whatever, for the case of any specific country, the reasons for the increased attention to the possibilities and problems of 'decentralized' or 'delegated' planning, there is clearly the need for specialists in educational planning to become more systematically aware of this 'new frontier' of educational planning and to inquire systematically into its specific problems as well as into the quantitative and qualitative training needs which result from it.

5. Beyond the design of educational plans

Ever since there has been a systematic concern with educational planning, there have been different meanings of the term. Most of these meanings, however, have focused on the design of plans, and have lead to various strategies, methods and techniques by which plans for educational development could be designed, covering all the steps from ascertaining information on both the status quo of the educational system and future needs for educated manpower to the matching of target dates with target achievements. In accordance with this emphasis on plan design, the training of educational planners has been directed primarily to the mastery of the various techniques involved in these steps.

It probably took the conspicuous failure of so many seemingly well-designed educational plans to make us aware of the fact that there are other things to educational planning than merely the design of a plan, and that it was conceivable and perhaps even more appropriate to think of educational planning as being concerned not only with the design, but also with the implementation and, indeed, evaluation of educational plans. Already at a relatively abstract level, it would seem to make sense to think of a continuum or even a cyclical process in which the design of a plan, already anticipating the possibilities and constraints of its implementation, leads to an implementation phase which is in turn permeated by a continuous evaluation effort out of which new corrective or reinforcing insights would go into the design phase of yet another planning cycle.

Obviously, the frequent reality of educational administration and policy-making with its compartmentalization of functions is not necessarily conducive to translating this more holistic notion of the planning process into operating procedures. However, the dangers of limiting the planning of educational development to the design of plans and of isolating 'planners' from the problems of implementation and the insights of evaluation are such that a serious effort has to be made to rethink the relationship and

interaction between those administrative units which are, respectively, in charge of designing, implementing and evaluating plans for educational development and to redesign the profile of competence for those whose role it will be to integrate these various components more effectively than has been the case in the past. One of the most important elements of this profile will be the ability to see the planning process in its entirety, and to relate special skills to this encompassing perspective of the planning process.

II. IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAINING

In this second part, we will review briefly how the changes in educational planning which have been discussed in the first part are likely to affect the role and the competencies required of the people who will be in charge of educational planning in the years to come. This review should generate a first set of suggestions for the discussion of the need to redesign some of our training in educational planning.

1. The research component in training

Our first thesis had been that educational planning was bound to fail unless it was based on a thorough understanding of the complex set of social, political and economic factors which bear upon the development of educational systems. Those responsible for educational planning will require a systematic and rather sophisticated knowledge of the constraints which these factors create in order to determine the degrees of freedom within which education can exercise its leverage for development and change in the wider society. Enabling educational planners to cope with this role involves a dual task: First, they will have to be made aware of the important degree to which the development of educational systems is conditioned and determined by the state of the social system as a whole, and of the fact that educational development and reform is limited to what the existing dynamics of social structure, political power and economic wealth permit. Secondly, they have to acquire the skills needed to analyse these forces, their strengths and interrelationships, and to understand the ways in which they determine what kinds of educational developments, changes or reforms are realistically possible.

The first task will require, as an important part of all training, a critical examination of some of the assumptions guiding the making and the implementation of educational policy. Even though a great deal of lip service has been paid to the close relationship between economic development

and social and political change on the one hand, and educational development on the other, it is probably fair to say that the full extent to which the development of educational systems is conditioned by these non-educational factors is less than adequately appreciated and understood by those responsible for educational planning.

While the first task has to do more with the consciousness and perspective which educational planners ought to have as a frame of reference for their work, the second task requires the acquisition of certain competencies without which the educational planner would be unable to obtain the knowledge necessary to place his task of planning the development of education into the context of the wider network of social, political and economic factors. To do this kind of diagnosis well requires sound research lest the entire planning effort should be misled from the start. This means that a minimum of research skills are indispensable for those who take the task of educational planning seriously. While it is not necessary that every planner becomes a full-fledged researcher, he should at least be able not only to understand, but also to assess and evaluate critically the quality and significance of such research results as he may have to draw upon. This would include an appreciation of the methodologies underlying research in the major disciplines as well as the exposure to exemplary pieces of research in relation to the treatment of policy issues to which such research may be relevant. Wherever possible, participants in training programmes should be encouraged to undertake their own modest research projects or to participate in ongoing investigations in order to acquire not only specific skills but the kind of perspective that will help them understand better the social context within which their task is situated.

2. Distribution, disparities, equality in education

If it is true that educational planning is called upon, as a function of changing policy objectives, to devote more attention than in the past to the distributive aspects of the development of educational systems, then educational planners face a task for which they need to be more adequately prepared. It is one thing to project, on the basis of certain baseline data and need projections, the numerical growth of the different components of an educational system over a specified period of time, and another thing to plan changes in the pattern with which this growth is to be distributed across the various regions or social and ethnic groups of a country.

Here again, an important diagnostic component is involved: It is impossible to plan for the reduction or elimination of disparities in education unless one has a rather clear idea not only of the nature and extent of existing disparities but also of their underlying causes and conditions. In the first instance it is necessary to determine, for example, in the case of regional disparities, why some regions enjoy a considerably better supply of educational institutions and services than others. It is even more difficult, however, to determine why certain regional or other groups make much less use of available educational services or are remarkably less successful in benefiting from these services than other groups.

In addition to the ways and means of obtaining these kinds of insights, there are specific skills and methods which are particularly relevant to a form of educational planning which is more oriented towards providing equality in education than to sheer growth. In addition to various methods for disaggregating indicators and statistics of educational development in order to make regional, social, ethnic and other disparities transparent in more detail, the school map as an instrument of assessing some of the spatial dimensions of educational development is a case in point.

3. Understanding the determinants of educational outcomes

If educational planning is to move its concerns beyond the flow of students through the various levels of the educational system to include the question of what happens to them during this process, a new dimension is likely to open up in the role and the training of educational planners. Most educational administrations have developed in such a way as to place 'educational planning' units and those units dealing with the contents and qualities of the learning process at some considerable organizational distance from each other. Whether and how this gap can be bridged in the interest of a closer integration of 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' educational planning is difficult to answer in the abstract and will have to be dealt with in the particular circumstances of each country. What seems necessary and possible, however, is to provide educational planners with a much better sense of the problems, constraints and possibilities involved in trying to determine the outcomes of educational processes in more qualitative terms. At the same time, those now responsible for the content and substance of education, especially in terms of curriculum development, teacher training, etc., could and should be made more conscious of the advantages which a systematic planning approach could bring to their work.

In order to make educational planners more aware of the dimension of qualitative outcomes of the educational process, it is most important to engage them in the ongoing discussion of how educational factors interact with non-educational factors (such as socio-economic background) in producing certain learning effects. Whatever conclusions can be drawn from existing research on the determinants of educational outcomes should be an integral part of the training of educational planners, as should be the main arguments in the controversy over the relative importance of hereditary versus environmental factors in learning.

At a more technical level, educational planners should become familiar with the process whereby general educational objectives are translated into content specifications and learning goals for purposes of curriculum development, and should be familiar with both the substantive and the methodological aspects of evaluating whether or not a certain set of learning conditions has achieved the results it was designed to achieve.

4. Training for regional and local planning

The growing importance of planning at sub-national levels is changing and enlarging the frame of reference within which we have been accustomed to see the role and professional identity of the educational planner. By and large, our training has been geared to the planning tasks at the central level, and even though many of the skills required at that level would be just as relevant to planning tasks at the level of provinces or local communities, planning on a more reduced scale and in closer proximity to the reality of the educational system is likely to call for a somewhat different training concept. The specific nature of such a concept would be a function of just what level and kind of planning is involved. If, as some argue, planning at the regional or provincial level is likely to be of a more integrated nature, the educational planner at that level will need to understand the development and planning problems in such related sectors as health, agricultural production, housing, infrastructure development, etc. Similarly, if planning, especially at the level of the local community, is to involve the active participation of the members of the community, a rather thorough understanding of the social and political fabric of the community is needed in order to maximize the benefits of such participation for the planning process.

Unlike the planner at the national level, regional and local planning personnel have reference points for their actions both below and above in the structure of the administrative hierarchy. It is necessary to understand these reference points and their function in the overall administrative network so as to bring to an optimum match the specific interests and needs of the area for which the planner is responsible and the broader considerations and priorities in national policies.

One of the strongest arguments in favour of more 'micro'-planning in education is the possibility of closer contact with the developmental reality of a region of the country. In order to bring the benefit of this closeness to bear on the results of the planning process, the planner at the regional level has to make a special effort, and has to possess the necessary skills, to understand and be 'in tune' with the problems and possibilities of his region or community. Here again, a major diagnostic effort is required in order to make sure that whatever plan is developed is optimally responsive to the particular needs of a given area.

5. Implementing and evaluating educational plans

In the attempt to arrive at a more comprehensive notion of educational planning that would link the design of the educational plan with its implementation and evaluation in a continuing cycle, we face once again considerable obstacles in the arrangement of existing administrative structures where the responsibilities for designing plans and for their execution are often far removed from each other. Nevertheless, the need to overcome the increasing isolation of the plan designer is so imperative that, pending the revision of some over-compartmentalized structures, an effort must already be made to have this notion of the design-implementation-evaluation continuum reflected in the training of educational planners. At the very least, the design of educational plans stands to gain a great deal in realism and feasibility from a better understanding on the part of the designer of the problems of implementing plans and of the criteria and methods for evaluating their success.

Since implementing plans for educational development is at the very heart of educational administrations, we are opening a wide field indeed for potential elements in the training of educational planning personnel. While no attempt should be made at this point to unduly limit this field, it is clear that the mechanisms of resource allocation (budget planning and control, etc.), the identification and implementation of specific projects and the arrangements for the monitoring, inspection and evaluation of educational development are particularly important from the point of view of

extending the perspective of the educational planner into the area of implementation and evaluation.

From this point of view, the distinction between 'planning' and 'administration' becomes more and more tenuous both from the point of view of administrative organisation and of personnel training and recruitment. There may be virtue in adopting the more encompassing notion of 'managing the development of educational systems' which would include the prognostic and design phase of educational planning as we used to know it as well as the various activities designed to assure not only the implementation of the plan, but its continuous adjustment in the light of ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

CONCLUSION

If the concept and practice of educational planning is changing, it becomes imperative to reconsider the preparation of those who are to assume major responsibilities in planning educational development. This paper has attempted to indicate some of the directions which this reconsideration might take; its particular assertions are subject to discussion, disagreement, and modification as we gain a better understanding of how the process and outcome of educational planning can be further improved and better related to the complex reality of social, political, and economic life. There will undoubtedly be new elements in the future training of educational planning personnel, but there will also be the need to retain many of the basic skills of the craft of forecasting, without which the planning process may well remain so abstract as to loose its utility for the decision-maker.

Whatever the final outcome of this reconsideration, however, it is clear that the scope of preparing people for planning the development of education is likely to increase substantially: more and more diverse skills are needed to cope with a wider array of tasks and problems. This implies also a further differentiation of roles in the area of educational planning: It is becoming more and more difficult for any one individual to be sufficiently competent in all the various tasks required in planning educational development, and a division of labor among specialists becomes indispensable. To identify the 'competence profile' for each of these specialisations and to translate them into suitable training or retraining programmes will be one of the most important responsibilities of national as well as international institutions concerned with educational planning.